

REMARKS

In the last Office Action, claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 15 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as not being enabled by the specification. Claims 7-8 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite because of the lack of antecedent basis for terms appearing in claims 7 and 19. Claims 1, 2, 7, 10, 15 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by US 5,263,275 to Rumbaugh.

The Examiner acknowledged consideration of the Information Disclosure Statement and prior art references submitted therewith.

It is noted that the Examiner has not acknowledged applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119 nor receipt of the priority document from the International Bureau. For completeness of the record, applicants request that the Examiner acknowledge the priority claim and receipt of the priority document in the next Office Action.

In accordance with this response, original claims 1-20 have been replaced by new claims 21-41. The specification has been revised in editorial respects and to provide a direct antecedent basis for the claim language. Figs. 8, 9 and 11 have been revised to correct certain reference numerals to conform the drawings to the written

description in the specification. A new abstract that complies with U.S. practice has been added.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of their application in light of the foregoing amendments and the following discussion.

New claims 21-41 all read on the elected species (Species II, Fig. 6). The new claims also obviate the Section 112, first and second paragraphs, rejections and the Section 102(b) rejection.

The present invention relates to a variable grip structure that has an elastic grip member that can be selectively twisted about a longitudinal axis of the grip structure to adapt to the hand shape and size and preference of the user. In the embodiment shown, for example, in Fig. 4, the variable grip structure comprises a shaft body having forward, middle and rearward shaft portions 2, 3, 4 that are disposed in series along a longitudinal axis of the shaft body, and an elastic finger-grip member 1 disposed around and encircling the shaft body. A linking member 7 extends axially through the middle shaft portion 3 and is rotatable relative to the middle shaft portion. The rearward end portion of the linking member 7 is fixed to the rear shaft portion 4, and the forward end portion of the linking member is fixed to the forward shaft portion 2. A forward part of the grip member 1 is fixed to the forward shaft portion 2, and a rearward part

of the grip member is fixed to the middle shaft portion 3. By such a construction, relative rotation of the middle and rearward shaft portions 3, 4 elastically twists the grip member 1 about the longitudinal axis of the shaft body.

In the embodiment shown, for example, in Fig. 11, the variable grip structure comprises a shaft body having forward and rearward shaft portions 14, 15 that are rotatable relative to one another about a longitudinal axis of the shaft body, and an elastic finger-grip member 1 disposed around and encircling the shaft body. A forward part of the grip member 1 is fixed to the forward shaft portion 14 and a rearward part of the grip member is fixed to the rearward shaft portion 15. By such a construction, rotation of the forward shaft portion 14 relative to the rear shaft portion 15 elastically twists the grip member about the longitudinal axis.

Claims 21-29 are directed to a variable grip structure having a shaft body comprised of forward and rearward shaft portions, and claims 30-41 are directed to a variable grip structure having a shaft body comprised of forward, middle and rearward shaft portions. Independent claims 21 and 30 each require that the elastic finger-grip member undergo elastic twisting in response to relative rotation of shaft portions of a shaft body. No similar structure is disclosed or suggested by Rumbaugh or the other art of record.

Rumbaugh discloses a variable grip structure for a fishing rod handle, in which an elastic grip member 22 is fitted over a shell 32 that can be expanded outwardly to adjust the circumference of the elastic grip member 22. A plug 48 is threaded into one end of the shell 32. The plug 48 has a bullet-nose section 52 at its forward end. When the plug 48 is screwed into the shell 32, the bullet-nose section 52 of the plug 48 urges spreaders 40 of the shell 32 outwardly (Fig. 5) to enlarge the circumference of the elastic grip member 22. Stated otherwise, relative rotation between the plug 48 and the shell 32 causes outward extension of the spreaders 40 to enlarge the circumference of the elastic grip member 22. The grip member 22 does not undergo elastic twisting about the longitudinal axis of the handle.

By contrast, independent claim 21 requires that relative rotation of the forward and rearward shaft portions elastically twists the elastic finger-grip member about the longitudinal axis, and independent claim 30 recites that relative rotation of the middle and rearward shaft portions elastically twists the elastic finger-grip member about the longitudinal axis. No similar structure is disclosed or suggested by Rumbaugh.

The remaining references of record have been considered; however, it is not seen where these references cure the deficiencies of Rumbaugh.

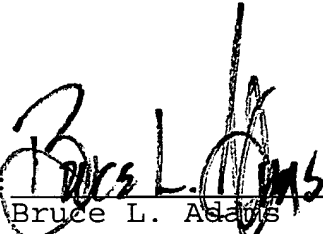
The dependent claims set forth further features of the variable grip structure that are not found in Rumbaugh or the other art of record.

In view of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in allowable form. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and passage of the application to issue are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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